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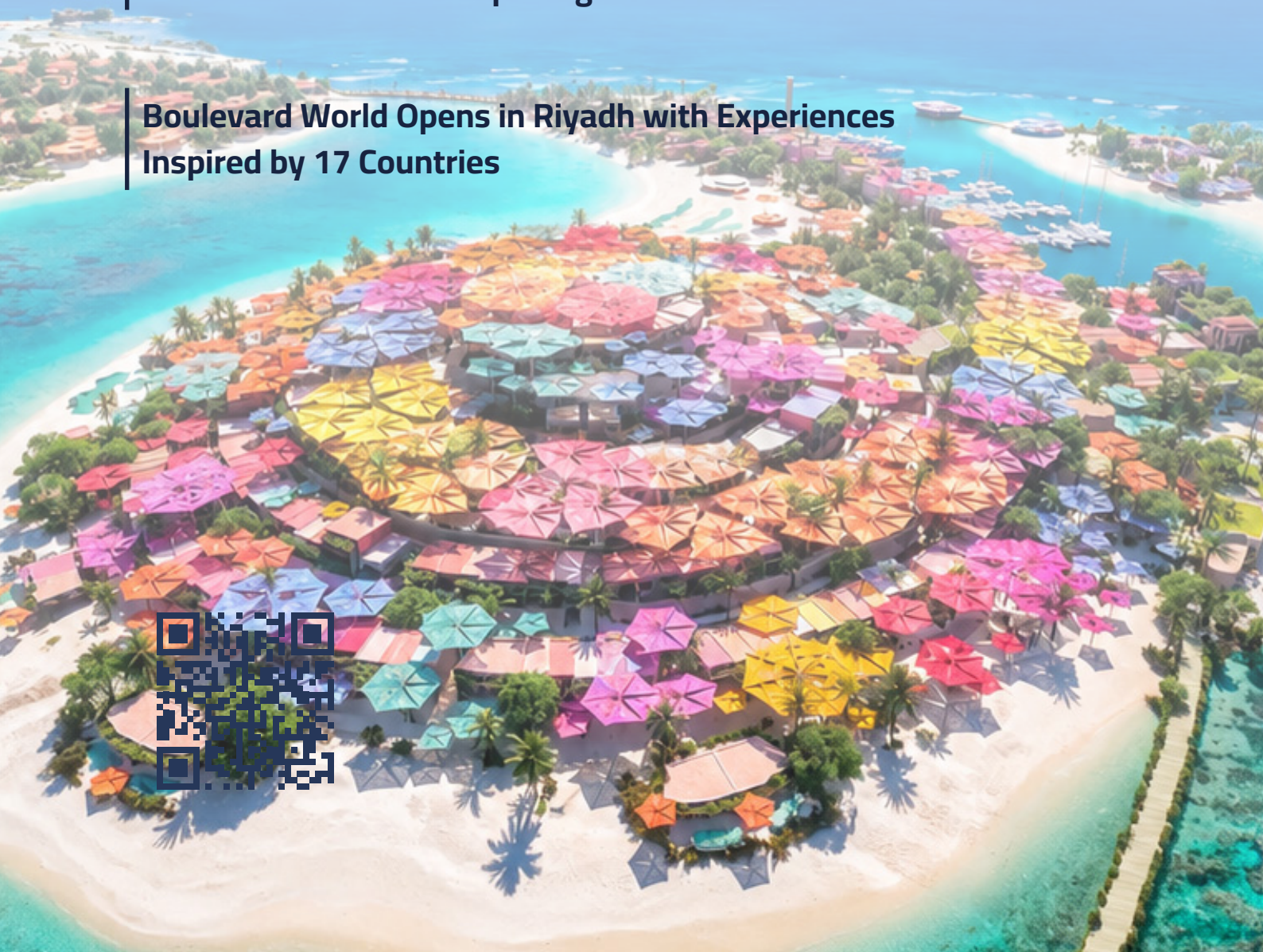
Winner of the "Most Influential Tourism Newspaper in the Arab World 2026" Award by AFUSU

Red Sea Global Announces Opening of 430-Key Grand Hyatt Resort on Shura Island, with Stays Available from December

WTM London 2026 Opens Tuesday Following £2.2 Billion in Business Generated at Previous Edition

Capella to Enter Dubai's Luxury Hospitality Market with 115-Room Hotel Opening in 2030

Boulevard World Opens in Riyadh with Experiences Inspired by 17 Countries



WTM London 2026 Opens Tuesday Following £2.2 Billion in Business Generated at Previous Edition



The 2025 edition welcomed 46,500 participants and 5,500 qualified buyers, while the 2026 event will focus on commercial partnerships, travel technology, and global tourism trends.

London – United Kingdom | Al Rehla

London is preparing to host World Travel Market (WTM London 2026) from November 3 to 5, bringing together international professionals from the tourism, travel, and hospitality industries for one of the sector's major global business events.

The upcoming edition follows strong commercial results in 2025, when the exhibition generated approximately £2.2 billion in business, according to the organizer, supported by more than 40,000 scheduled business meetings. These figures underline the event's role in facilitating commercial negotiations and connecting international tourism buyers with suppliers.

46,500 Participants from 182 Countries

The 2025 edition attracted approximately 46,500 participants, including 5,500 qualified buyers, representing an 8% increase in qualified buyers compared with the previous year.

Exhibitor numbers rose by 5%, with participation representing 182 countries. Exhibition space expanded by 25%, while the travel technology sector recorded growth of more than 55% in exhibitor numbers, reflecting the increasing importance of digital solutions in booking, distribution, and tourism service management.

Organized by RX Global at ExCeL London, the event brings together destination representatives, airlines, hotel groups, travel agencies, tour operators, and booking platforms to explore commercial partnerships and business opportunities.

Technology and Travel Trends Take Centre Stage



The 2026 edition will be held under the theme "Resilience, Recovery and Reinvention: The Next Era of Global Travel," featuring a conference programme addressing industry challenges, changing traveller behaviour, and business strategies responding to operational and commercial developments.

The exhibition will feature a dedicated WTM Travel Tech section, bringing together more than 135 technology providers showcasing artificial intelligence applications, big data, automation, payment systems, distribution technologies, and customer experience solutions.

The WTM Global Travel Report 2026 is also scheduled for release on the opening day, in collaboration with Tourism Economics, part of Oxford Economics.

The report will draw on data covering more than 185 countries, examining international arrivals, overnight stays, and tourism expenditure.

Commercial Opportunities for Arab Destinations

For participating Arab tourism authorities and businesses, WTM London provides an opportunity to engage with international tour operators, distribution companies, hospitality groups, and qualified buyers while presenting their tourism products to multiple source markets.

However, the actual economic value of participation will depend on confirmed contracts, commercial partnerships, and measurable business outcomes rather than attendance figures or meeting volumes alone.

Al Rehla Insight | What Does WTM Mean for Arab Travellers?

Although WTM London is primarily a business-to-business exhibition rather than a consumer travel event, its announcements can provide useful insights into destinations, tourism products, and services that may become available during 2027.

For Arab travellers, developments worth monitoring include newly announced airline routes, hotel openings, travel packages, and tourism services.

However, commercial agreements should not be confused with products already available for booking.

Confirmed launch dates, published prices, booking conditions, and officially announced services remain the most reliable information for making travel decisions.

Dubai South and Phoenix Aviation Sign Agreement to Develop Widebody Aircraft Maintenance Facility by 2029



A 35,000-square-metre hangar capable of accommodating three aircraft, alongside delivery and storage facilities and technical workshops, will support airlines across four major international regions

Dubai – UAE | Al Rehla

Dubai South has signed an agreement with Phoenix Aviation to develop a new maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facility dedicated to widebody aircraft at the Mohammed bin Rashid Aerospace Hub, with completion targeted for the first quarter of 2029.

The project represents a further expansion of Dubai's aviation infrastructure and its capacity to serve international airlines.

The agreement was announced on October 30, 2026, following its signing during MRO Europe in Amsterdam, in the presence of Nabil Al Kindi, Group CEO of Dubai South, and Julian Erhard, President and CEO of Phoenix Aviation, alongside senior representatives from both organisations.

Neither company disclosed the project's investment value or the expected commencement date of construction.

Hangar Designed to Accommodate Three Widebody Aircraft

The planned facility will feature a 35,000-square-metre hangar designed to accommodate three widebody aircraft simultaneously, including Boeing 777X and Airbus A350 models.

The development will also include an 18,000-square-metre aircraft delivery and storage centre, 15,000 square metres of workshops and warehouses, and 3,000 square metres of administrative offices.

Together, these components represent a total announced facility area of 71,000 square metres.

Maintenance, Cabin Modifications and Freighter Conversions

The new centre is intended to provide aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul services, alongside cabin modifications, aircraft refurbishment and passenger-to-freighter conversions.

Upon completion, Phoenix Aviation will operate two hangars within the Mohammed bin Rashid Aerospace Hub, including its existing facility capable of accommodating Airbus A380 aircraft.



The expansion is designed to enable the company to provide additional services to airlines operating across Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia, while also offering facilities for aircraft manufacturers and specialised aviation service providers.

Investment in Dubai's Aviation Services Ecosystem

Nabil Al Kindi said the agreement supports the development of an integrated aviation ecosystem at Dubai South, aimed at attracting international investment and expanding the range of aviation industry services available in the emirate.

Gilles Negre, Founder and Chairman of Phoenix Aviation, explained that the project aims to bring comprehensive widebody aircraft services together at a single location, with a focus on improving operational efficiency and reducing aircraft maintenance downtime.

The development forms part of the ongoing expansion of the Mohammed bin Rashid Aerospace Hub, which provides infrastructure for companies specialising in aviation services, aircraft maintenance and airport-related operations.

Al-Rehla Perspective | Why Does This Investment Matter to Airlines?

Aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul services are an essential component of the aviation industry's operational infrastructure, as airlines require specialised facilities for routine maintenance, technical modifications and cabin refurbishment.

The significance of the agreement lies in its planned addition of widebody aircraft maintenance capacity in Dubai, expanding the technical service options available to international carriers.

However, the project's actual commercial impact will depend on the completion of construction and the securing of maintenance and operating contracts, developments that have yet to be announced.



"The agreement supports the development of an integrated aviation ecosystem at Dubai South, aimed at attracting international investment and expanding the scope of aviation industry services."

Nabil Al Kindi
CEO of Dubai South Group

72 Hours | Travel Guide

72 Hours in Aqaba: From the Secrets of the Red Sea to Historic Fortresses and the Wadi Rum Desert

A three-day itinerary combining the ancient city, coral reefs and modern waterfront developments, with a desert excursion to one of Jordan's most remarkable natural destinations

Aqaba – Jordan | Al Rehla

Aqaba offers visitors a rare opportunity to enjoy three distinct experiences during a short stay: the Red Sea and its coral reefs, a historic city shaped by trade and caravan routes, and the spectacular desert landscapes of Wadi Rum, easily accessible on an excursion from the city.

Exploring Aqaba in 72 hours does not require constantly moving between resorts. The city offers archaeological landmarks, traditional markets and marine attractions, making it possible to create a balanced itinerary combining exploration and relaxation.

Day One | Discovering Historic Aqaba
Begin your journey at Aqaba Castle, whose most significant construction phases date back to the Mamluk period, particularly the reign of Sultan Qansuh al-Ghuri in the early 16th century.

The fortress served as a caravan stop and military installation before becoming associated with events of the Great Arab Revolt.

Nearby stands the House of Sharif Hussein bin Ali, which houses historical and archaeological collections, followed by the Great Arab Revolt Plaza overlooking the sea.

Elsewhere in the city centre, visitors can explore the remains of the early Islamic city of Ayla, an important chapter in Aqaba's history as a commercial trading centre on the Red Sea.

Day Two | Exploring the Underwater World
Dedicate your second day to Aqaba's southern coastline, where the Aqaba Marine Reserve extends for approximately seven kilometres. According to the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority, the reserve is home to more than 157 species of hard coral and 512 species of fish.

Visitors can enjoy snorkelling in designated areas or arrange a diving excursion through a licensed dive centre to explore sites such as the Japanese Garden, renowned for its coral reefs.
Those who prefer to stay out of the water can choose a glass-bottom boat tour to discover the marine environment.

The reserve's management emphasises the importance of avoiding contact with coral, never standing on reefs and observing designated activity zones.

Access to the reserve's beaches is free, while diving and boat excursions are subject to fees charged by individual operators.

Day Three | Into the Desert, Then Back to the Sea
Spend your final day on an excursion to Wadi Rum, beginning at the visitor centre before setting out with a licensed local guide to discover its sandy landscapes and dramatic rock formations.

The desert offers a striking contrast to Aqaba's coastal scenery, particularly for travellers interested in exploring Jordan's desert environment and Bedouin culture.

After returning to Aqaba, spend the evening in the modern Ayla development, which offers restaurants, waterfront promenades and leisure facilities.

Al-Rehla Travel Tips
Plan marine activities for a day when sea conditions are suitable, and book diving experiences in advance through an accredited operator.

A trip to Wadi Rum requires advance arrangements for transportation and a guide, with sufficient time allowed for the return journey to Aqaba.

Opening hours and activity fees may vary depending on the season and service provider, so travellers should verify the latest details before visiting.







Tunisia Adds Dar Hussein and Tourbet El Bey to Arab Architectural Heritage Register



ALECSO recognises two historic landmarks in Tunis' Medina during a meeting in Cairo. One once housed the capital's first municipality, while the other preserves the history of the Husainid dynasty, which ruled Tunisia for more than two centuries.

Tunis – Tunisia | Al Rehla

Tunisia's Ministry of Cultural Affairs has announced the inscription of Dar Hussein Palace and Tourbet El Bey, the mausoleum of the Husainid rulers, in the Register of Architectural and Urban Heritage in Arab Countries, maintained by the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO).

The designation supports efforts to document and safeguard two significant landmarks in the historic Medina of Tunis, reflecting the evolution of Tunisian architecture and the country's political and social history.

The inscriptions were approved during the 11th meeting of the Observatory of Architectural and Urban Heritage in Arab Countries, held at the headquarters of the League of Arab States in Cairo from October 25 to 27, 2026.

Tunisia's Ministry of Cultural Affairs announced the decision on Friday, October 30.

Dar Hussein: From Historic Palace to the Capital's First Municipality

Dar Hussein is one of the most prominent historic buildings in the Medina of Tunis. A major part of the palace dates to the 18th century, during the reign of Ali Bey, when it was constructed by Minister Ismail Kahia.

The building underwent further extensions in the early 19th century under Minister Youssef Saheb Ettabaa.

The palace acquired administrative significance in 1858 when it became the headquarters of Tunis' first municipality, under General Hussein, after whom the building was named.

In 1882, it was converted into the headquarters of the French military general staff. It subsequently served other institutional functions and today houses Tunisia's National Heritage Institute.

Architecturally, the palace is distinguished by its interior courtyard, decorative features, columns and arches, reflecting the traditions of prestigious residential architecture in Tunisia during previous centuries.

Tourbet El Bey: Preserving Three Centuries of History

Tourbet El Bey is among the most important funerary monuments in the Medina of Tunis, containing tombs associated with the Husainid dynasty, which ruled Tunisia from 1705 until 1957.

Construction of the monument began during the reign of Ali Bey II in the 18th century, within an urban and religious setting closely linked to the history of the ruling family.



The building is notable for its imposing architecture and varied decorative elements.

It is considered the largest princely mausoleum of the Husainid dynasty, preserving important examples of the artistic and funerary traditions that characterised the period.

A Historic Medina with Around 700 Landmarks

The new inscriptions are particularly significant because both monuments are located within the Medina of Tunis, which has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1979.

The historic district contains approximately 700 monuments, including palaces, mosques, madrasas, mausoleums and traditional markets.

According to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, the Arab heritage registration aims to strengthen documentation and restoration efforts, while encouraging the exchange of scientific expertise in architectural heritage conservation.

No new funding or specific tourism development programme has been announced in connection with the inscriptions, and there is currently no evidence of a direct impact on visitor numbers.

Al-Rehla Perspective | Exploring Historic Palaces and the Husainid Legacy

The Medina of Tunis offers visitors an opportunity to discover the capital's history through its network of narrow streets, traditional souks, palaces and religious monuments.

Dar Hussein and Tourbet El Bey can be explored as part of a cultural itinerary through the historic district, including the surroundings of the Zitouna Mosque and neighbouring heritage buildings.





My Travel Experiences

China: A Global Tourism Powerhouse and an Endless Treasure of Civilizations and Natural Wonders

By:

Dr. Hossam Darwish

President of the Afro-Asian Union for Tourism & Secretary-General of the Arab Tourism Media Club

China is one of the world's greatest tourism destinations. It is not merely a country with diverse tourism attractions; it is an ancient civilization whose roots stretch back thousands of years, combining the charm of history, the beauty of nature, technological advancement, and the modern lifestyle of its vibrant cities.

China possesses an extraordinary tourism wealth, highlighted by world-famous historical landmarks such as the Great Wall of China, the Forbidden City, and the Terracotta Army, alongside dynamic cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen, which showcase remarkable urban development and economic progress.

China also offers breathtaking natural diversity, from majestic mountains, rivers, lakes, and forests to the rice terraces of the south and the spectacular landscapes of Guilin and Zhangjiajie. This natural richness is complemented by its vibrant cultural heritage, traditional arts, distinctive cuisine, and colorful festivals.

The importance of Chinese tourism goes far beyond attracting millions of visitors. It is a major economic engine, creating employment and investment opportunities while promoting cultural exchange, international trade, and stronger connections between nations.

From my experience and perspective in international tourism, I believe China represents a model worthy of global attention, not only because of its diverse tourism products but also because of its ability to integrate technology, innovation, and modern infrastructure into the development of its tourism industry.

China does not simply sell tourists a journey; it offers them a complete experience connecting an ancient past with an extraordinary future. It is a destination that deserves to stand at the forefront of the global tourism map and serve as a strategic partner in shaping the future of international tourism.





Capella to Enter Dubai's Luxury Hospitality Market with 115-Room Hotel Opening in 2030



Developed by H&H and designed by Denniston at Dubai Peninsula, the hotel will feature private-pool suites, a 600-square-metre signature suite and a 70-metre rooftop swimming pool

Dubai – UAE | Al Rehla

Capella Hotel Group has announced its entry into Dubai's hospitality market with the development of Capella Dubai, a luxury hotel scheduled to open in 2030 at Dubai Peninsula, a waterfront destination in Jumeirah. The property is planned to feature 115 rooms and suites.

Announced on October 29, 2026, the project marks another step in the group's expansion beyond the Asia-Pacific region. It is being developed by H&H, with Denniston responsible for the design.

The hotel will focus on intimate luxury accommodation, featuring suites with private swimming pools, personalised services and cultural experiences connected to Dubai, rather than relying primarily on a large room inventory.

The group has not disclosed the hotel's investment cost or the financial terms of its agreement with the developer. A specific opening date within 2030 has also not been announced.

A 600-Square-Metre Signature Suite

The hotel will offer a collection of rooms and suites, including suites with private pools. Its accommodation offering will be led by the 600-square-metre Capella Suite, designed to combine the privacy of an exclusive residence with the services of a luxury hotel.



the brand's expansion beyond Asia-Pacific into the Middle East and Europe represents a new chapter in its development.

Roland Fasel, President of Capella Hotel Group

The concept targets guests seeking spacious accommodation, privacy and individually tailored services, with an emphasis on the overall guest experience rather than the number of rooms.

Capella Culturists will be a central feature of the hotel, with a dedicated team designing personalised programmes that introduce guests to Dubai's heritage, culture, neighbourhoods and local experiences.

The hotel will also offer Capella Curates, a programme providing exclusive experiences designed to connect guests with the destination's cultural and creative character.

Rooftop Swimming Pool and Five Dining and Social Venues

The hotel's planned facilities include five dining, lounge and social venues, featuring an all-day dining restaurant, a lobby lounge, a speciality restaurant and a rooftop bar.

The rooftop will feature a swimming pool extending approximately 70 metres, complemented by relaxation areas and private cabanas for individuals and couples.

Additional facilities will include a family swimming pool at beach level and the Little Stars children's club.

For wellness enthusiasts, the hotel will feature Auriga Spa, offering private treatment rooms, hydrotherapy facilities, a traditional hammam and dedicated relaxation spaces, alongside a fitness centre and a studio for physical and mindfulness activities.

For business tourism and private events, the plans include a ballroom with a pre-function area, two meeting rooms, a VIP majlis and an outdoor event space.

Part of a 210-Acre Waterfront Destination

Capella Dubai will be located within Dubai Peninsula, a mixed-use waterfront development spanning approximately 210 acres, or 85 hectares, at the point where the Dubai Water Canal meets the sea along the Jumeirah coastline.

The master plan combines hotels, luxury residences, restaurants, retail and entertainment facilities, as well as a superyacht marina, a one-kilometre private beach and botanical gardens covering more than two million square feet.

These amenities form part of the wider waterfront destination and are not all exclusive facilities of Capella Dubai.

The hotel will be part of a destination designed to attract international hospitality brands, including Aman and Rosewood, within a development combining tourism accommodation, residential properties and waterfront leisure facilities.

Capella: A New Phase of International Expansion

Roland Fasel, President of Capella Hotel Group, said the brand's expansion beyond Asia-Pacific into the Middle East and Europe represents a new chapter in its development.

He explained that the group focuses on selecting destinations where it can deliver distinctive hospitality experiences combining local culture, personalised service and design.

Shahab Lutfi, Chairman of H&H, said the development of the hotel in collaboration with Denniston is based on integrating architecture, hospitality spaces and landscape design into a cohesive vision.

He noted that the hotel will become one of the components of Dubai Peninsula, alongside residential, hospitality and public amenities.

Al-Rehla Perspective | Why Are Luxury Brands Investing in Hotels with Fewer Rooms?

Capella Dubai reflects a hospitality model centred on a relatively limited number of rooms and suites, complemented by generous living spaces, personalised services and experiences connected to the destination's culture.

This approach differs from larger hotels designed to accommodate high volumes of guests, although a smaller room inventory does not automatically guarantee higher room rates or occupancy levels.

The project's tourism value lies in combining luxury accommodation with opportunities to explore Dubai, alongside wellness facilities, dining experiences and event spaces within a mixed-use waterfront destination.

With the opening targeted for 2030, the hotel's actual contribution to Dubai's accommodation capacity and tourism market will depend on the project's completion and commencement of operations.

Room rates and the date on which reservations will become available have not yet been announced.

Cities of Knowledge | Al-Rehla

University of Coimbra: A 736-Year-Old Institution That Shaped the Identity of an Entire Portuguese City

Founded in 1290 and permanently established in Coimbra in 1537, the university is home to a Baroque library containing approximately 60,000 books and a campus recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2013

Coimbra – Portugal | Al Rehla

Its earliest academic disciplines included canon law, civil law, medicine and the arts, before its fields of study expanded alongside Portugal's educational transformation.

In 1772, the reforms known as the Pombaline Reforms modernised the teaching of mathematics, natural sciences and medicine. They also led to the establishment of new scientific facilities, including laboratories, a botanical garden, and instruments for observation and experimentation.

Joanina Library: A Baroque Treasure Housing Thousands of Books

Among the university's most remarkable landmarks is the Joanina Library, constructed during the reign of King John V and completed in 1728.

The library houses approximately 60,000 books, many dating from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, within richly decorated rooms featuring carved woodwork, gilded ornamentation and elaborate painted ceilings.

In the Portuguese city of Coimbra, the university is far more than an educational institution located within the city. For centuries, it has played a defining role in shaping Coimbra's architectural and cultural identity.

Perched on a hill overlooking the historic neighbourhoods, the University of Coimbra's buildings extend around former palaces, squares and historic colleges, creating an urban landscape that connects education with Portugal's history and the development of science and literature.

Founded in 1290 during the reign of King Denis I, the university is Portugal's oldest and one of Europe's oldest continuously operating universities.

From Lisbon to Coimbra

The institution was originally established in Lisbon before relocating several times between Lisbon and Coimbra over the following centuries. It finally settled permanently in Coimbra in 1537 by order of King John III.





More than a repository for books, the library played a significant scientific and cultural role throughout the university's history. Its collections remain an important part of Portugal's academic heritage.

A University Recognised as World Heritage

In 2013, UNESCO inscribed the site "University of Coimbra – Alta and Sofia" on the World Heritage List, recognising its architectural and cultural significance and its influence on educational institutions throughout the Portuguese-speaking world.

The designated site includes the former Royal Palace, which became part of the university, the Joanina Library, the Chapel of São Miguel, historic colleges, and academic and scientific facilities dating from different periods.

UNESCO highlights the distinctive relationship between Coimbra and its university, where educational functions have influenced street layouts, architecture and local traditions.

Knowledge as Living Heritage

Coimbra's significance extends beyond its history. The university remains an active centre for education and research, comprising eight faculties covering disciplines including medicine, law, engineering, sciences, economics and the humanities.

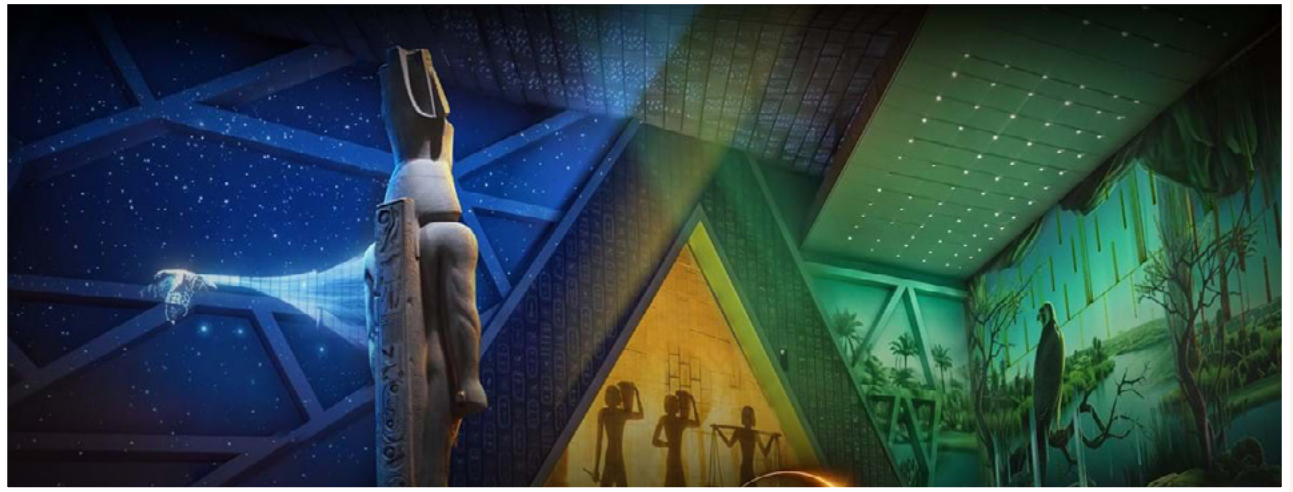
In June 2026, the university hosted a conference of Universeum, the European Academic Heritage Network, which addressed the preservation of academic collections, museums and scientific archives.

Al-Rehla Perspective

Coimbra offers a compelling example of how a city's educational history can become a cultural tourism experience without separating the university from its continuing academic mission.

Exploring its historic squares, library and academic buildings reveals how education has shaped not only the city's architecture but also its identity and collective memory, extending far beyond the classroom.

‘Eternal Sun’ to Illuminate the Grand Egyptian Museum with an Immersive Journey Through 5,000 Years of Civilisation



The 35-minute light and sound experience launches in the Grand Hall on November 1 and runs until April 2027, with separate tickets and performances in Arabic and English

Giza – Egypt | Al Rehla

The Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) is preparing to launch a new evening cultural and tourism experience titled Eternal Sun on Sunday, November 1, 2026, coinciding with the first anniversary of its official inauguration.

The 35-minute immersive experience will take place in the museum’s Grand Hall, combining architectural projection mapping, music and storytelling in Arabic and English.

According to the museum’s official website, the experience will run until April 30, 2027, adding a new dimension to the regular visitor programme and allowing guests to explore one of the museum’s most impressive architectural spaces in a different evening setting.

Five Thousand Years Brought to Life Through Light

The Eternal Sun experience transforms the walls and architectural surfaces of the Grand Hall into a dynamic visual canvas through projection mapping technology and animated effects.

The presentation draws on approximately 5,000 years of ancient Egyptian civilisation, using a narrative inspired by the cycle of the sun and the transition from darkness to light, accompanied by music and immersive audiovisual effects.

The experience allows visitors to appreciate the museum’s interior architecture as an integral part of the storytelling, rather than simply as a space for displaying archaeological treasures.

Two Evening Performances in Two Languages

According to the published schedule, the experience will be presented twice each evening on operating days, excluding Wednesdays and Saturdays.

The English-language performance begins at 7:30 p.m., followed by the Arabic-language performance at 9:00 p.m.

Each session lasts 35 minutes, and visitors are advised to arrive approximately 30 minutes before the scheduled start time to complete entry procedures.

Ticket Prices and Reservations

The official booking website lists admission for Egyptian adults at EGP 480, while tickets for Egyptian children aged 6 to 12 cost EGP 240.
For international visitors, tickets are priced at EGP 1,500 for adults and EGP 750 for children.

Tickets for the experience are sold separately and do not automatically include admission to the museum’s permanent exhibition galleries.

Tickets are non-refundable and non-transferable.
Children aged six and above may attend, while visitors under the age of 15 must be accompanied by an adult.



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The show connects international exhibitors and buyers across the MICE, leisure, and corporate travel segments, providing a focused platform to build new partnerships, strengthen business relationships, and explore opportunities across Asia's travel market.

ITB Asia 2026 will take place from 21-23 October 2026 at Marina Bay Sands, Singapore, and is organised by Messe Berlin Asia Pacific.

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Morocco Allocates MAD 2.21 Billion for Tourism Investment in 2027, Prioritising Air Connectivity

The Moroccan National Tourism Office plans to expand partnerships with airlines and tour operators and diversify international source markets, following 19.8 million tourist arrivals and MAD 138.1 billion in travel revenues in 2025.

Rabat – Morocco | Al Rehla

The Moroccan National Tourism Office (ONMT) plans to implement an investment programme worth MAD 2.217 billion in 2027, focusing on expanding air connectivity, strengthening commercial partnerships with international airlines and tour operators, accelerating digital marketing, and diversifying tourism source markets.

According to the Report on Public Establishments and Enterprises accompanying Morocco's Draft Finance Law for 2027, the planned investment forms part of the country's efforts to enhance its competitiveness in international tourism markets.

The allocation follows record tourism performance in 2025, as Morocco continues pursuing its national target of attracting 26 million tourists annually by 2030.

Air Connectivity and Commercial Partnerships

The investment programme prioritises the development of new air routes alongside stronger commercial agreements with airlines and international tour operators to support Morocco's visibility and accessibility in overseas markets.

Other priorities include accelerating digital transformation, diversifying target markets, and implementing integrated marketing strategies designed to strengthen Morocco's position as an international tourism destination.

These initiatives build on ONMT's "Light in Action" strategy, which includes the international "Morocco, Kingdom of Light" promotional campaign, alongside targeted domestic tourism campaigns highlighting the country's diverse destinations.

Tourism Revenues Reach MAD 138.1 Billion

Morocco's investment plans follow strong tourism performance in 2025, when the country welcomed 19.8 million tourists, representing a 14% increase compared with 2024.

Travel revenues rose by 21% to MAD 138.1 billion, while classified tourist accommodation establishments recorded 43.4 million overnight stays, an increase of 9%.

These results provide a substantial commercial foundation for expanding cooperation with international tourism companies and strengthening Morocco's presence in global travel distribution networks.

However, the figures do not necessarily indicate that visitor arrivals or tourism revenues will increase at the same pace in subsequent years.

Investment Implementation Remains a Key Challenge

Government figures show that ONMT implemented investments worth MAD 1.83 billion in 2025, compared with an originally programmed allocation of MAD 2.48 billion, representing an execution rate of 74%.

During the first half of 2026, implemented investments reached MAD 727 million, while year-end estimates point to approximately MAD 2 billion.

These figures highlight the importance of distinguishing between planned investment allocations and expenditure actually implemented, particularly as the 2027 programme remains part of the draft national budget.






HOTEL RIAD
ALMADINA

Red Sea Global Announces Opening of 430-Key Grand Hyatt Resort on Shura Island, with Stays Available from December



The resort features more than 5,000 square metres of event space, nine dining venues and a 1,390-square-metre main ballroom, expanding the destination's capacity for business tourism and international conferences

Riyadh – Saudi Arabia | Al Rehla

Red Sea Global (RSG) has announced the opening of Grand Hyatt The Red Sea on Shura Island, featuring 430 rooms, suites and villas, marking another expansion of luxury hospitality at Saudi Arabia's Red Sea destination.

According to Hyatt's official website, the resort is accepting reservations for stays beginning December 1, 2026.

The property introduces another international hotel brand to Shura Island, the central hub of The Red Sea destination, with a particular focus on conferences, corporate meetings and major events, alongside leisure and family tourism.

More Than 5,000 Square Metres of Event and Conference Space

According to Hyatt, the resort features more than 5,000 square metres of flexible event space, while Red Sea Global's announcement identifies over 2,400 square metres of dedicated meeting and function facilities.

These include a main ballroom measuring 1,390 square metres, with capacity for up to 1,700 guests depending on the event configuration, alongside a second ballroom covering 683 square metres.

Additional facilities include meeting rooms and outdoor spaces designed for conferences, exhibitions and special occasions.

Together, these venues enable the resort to accommodate a broad range of events, from executive meetings and corporate gatherings to international conferences and large-scale celebrations.

Pagano: Expanding the Destination's Conference Capabilities

John Pagano, Group CEO of Red Sea Global, said the addition of Grand Hyatt strengthens the destination's ability to host international conferences, corporate meetings and major events.

He explained that the development of hospitality infrastructure is intended to serve both business and leisure travellers, supporting Saudi Arabia's growing presence in the international tourism and events industry.



"The addition of Grand Hyatt strengthens the destination's capacity to host international conferences, corporate meetings and major events."

John Pagano
Group CEO of Red Sea Global

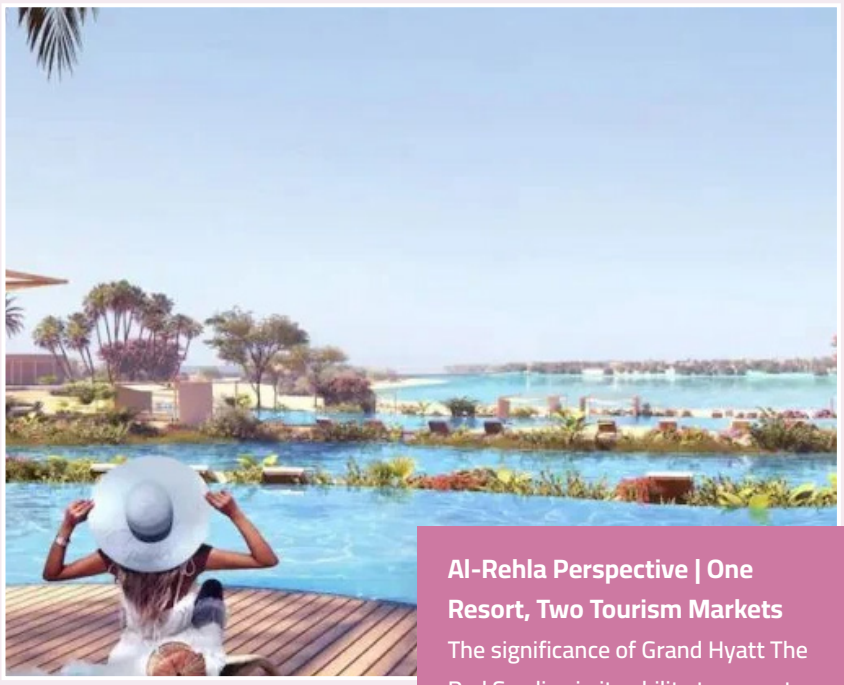
The resort forms part of Shura Island's development master plan, which envisages 11 internationally branded resorts alongside leisure, retail and residential facilities.

Nine Dining Venues and Family-Friendly Facilities

Grand Hyatt The Red Sea offers nine dining venues, as well as indoor and outdoor swimming pools and a fitness centre.

Its Ethereal Spa features ten treatment rooms dedicated to wellness and relaxation.

The resort also includes facilities for children and teenagers, together with spaces for family activities and beachfront recreation.



Accommodation ranges from guest rooms and suites to private villas, with architecture and interiors inspired by the Red Sea's coastal environment and coral formations.

Close to Shura Marina and the Island's Golf Course

The resort is located near Shura Marina, which provides 159 yacht berths, offering guests convenient access to the island's restaurants, retail outlets and leisure facilities.

Nearby attractions include Shura Links, the island's golf course, which forms part of an integrated tourism offering combining hotel accommodation, marine activities and recreational experiences.

Red Sea Global, a company owned by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF), is developing The Red Sea and AMAALA destinations through projects encompassing hotels, infrastructure and leisure facilities.

Al-Rehla Perspective | One Resort, Two Tourism Markets

The significance of Grand Hyatt The Red Sea lies in its ability to serve two distinct tourism segments within a single property: luxury leisure travel and business tourism, including meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions.

With 430 accommodation units and extensive event facilities, the resort provides infrastructure designed to accommodate corporate groups, conference delegates and business travellers alongside individual guests and families.

However, its success in the conference market will depend on securing actual events and hosting contracts, while its hotel performance will be determined by booking volumes and occupancy rates once guests begin arriving.

The announcement represents another step in expanding the accommodation capacity of The Red Sea destination, with the commencement of guest stays in December marking an important milestone for assessing the resort's operational performance.

Investments Under the Spotlight

Tourism Investment in Oman: OMR 122 Million in Agreements and Plans to Add 1,000 Hotel Rooms

OMRAN expands development partnerships in Muscat and Yiti, Muriya plans to increase hotel capacity in Salalah and Jebel Sifah, while an Egyptian hospitality operator enters Oman's resort market

Muscat – Sultanate of Oman | Al Rehla

Tourism development agreements announced in the Sultanate of Oman during 2026 highlight the diversity of investment models across the sector, ranging from integrated tourism complexes and hotel expansions to partnerships with regional hospitality operators.

Key players include OMRAN Group, Muriya Tourism Development and Alargan Towell Investment Company, alongside developers and operators from Egypt and other markets. Their projects range from signed development agreements and expansion plans to ongoing construction phases.

OMR 122 Million Across Three Development Agreements

On October 13, 2026, OMRAN Group announced the signing of three development agreements worth more than OMR 122 million, equivalent to approximately $318 million, with Egypt's Hassan Allam Group through its development arm, GROVA Developments, and Aurelian Development.

The agreements cover two residential projects in Madinat Al Irfan, with a combined value of OMR 44.5 million, in addition to the OMR 78 million Yiti Hills & Oasis development.

The Yiti project spans approximately 200,000 square metres and includes a five-star resort and 490 residential units.

These components demonstrate that the agreements do not represent exclusively hotel-related investments. Instead, they include residential development within integrated destinations combining hospitality, services and accommodation.

Muriya Plans to Add 1,000 Hotel Rooms

In a separate development, Muriya Tourism Development announced plans in September 2026 to add approximately 1,000 hotel rooms over the following three to five years across its Hawana Salalah and Jebel Sifah destinations.

The company operates as a partnership between Orascom Development and OMRAN Group, with cumulative investments in Oman exceeding $750 million, according to its disclosed figures.

Muriya also reported that it had already invested more than $25 million in infrastructure and construction works at its Al Soudah Island project, with plans to invest at least another $65 million.

The first amount represents expenditure already reported as incurred, while the



"Yiti Hills and Oasis"



"Hawana Salalah"



"Jebel Sifah"







second remains a planned future investment that has not yet been fully realised.

Egyptian Hotel Operator Enters Oman's Resort Market

On May 12, 2026, Alargan Towell Investment Company signed a hotel management agreement with Egypt's Pickalbatros Group to operate the main hotel within Oman's Al Nakheel tourism development.

The hotel component is planned to include 305 rooms, suites and villas, alongside leisure, water-based entertainment and retail facilities.

The agreement marks the Egyptian group's entry into the Gulf resort operations market. However, it does not indicate that the hotel has opened or begun generating operating revenue.

Unlike real estate development agreements, this arrangement concerns the management of a hospitality property within a project being developed by another company.

Al-Rehla Perspective | Where Does the Economic Value Lie?

The three developments illustrate an investment model that combines tourism land development, capital attraction and specialist operating expertise, rather than treating hotel construction as an activity separate from its surrounding destination.

However, assessing their economic viability requires monitoring construction progress, actual financing and confirmed opening dates, followed by occupancy rates, average daily room rates and operating returns once the properties begin operations.

It is also important not to combine the value of newly signed development agreements with companies' cumulative historical investments and present the total as fresh investment flows during a single year. Likewise, planned hotel rooms should not be counted

as additions to the operational accommodation supply until the properties officially open.

Bahrain Begins Mandatory Health Insurance for Residents, Introducing New Requirements for Hospitality and Tourism Businesses



Phased implementation begins on October 31 alongside the issuance and renewal of work and residence permits, requiring hotels and tourism companies to review insurance coverage for eligible employees

Manama – Bahrain | Al Rehla

Bahrain began the phased implementation of its National Health Insurance Programme for residents on Saturday, October 31, 2026, linking the new requirements to the issuance and renewal of work and residence permits for eligible categories.

The regulatory measure affects businesses employing expatriate workers, including hotels, tourism companies and restaurants.

Lieutenant General Dr. Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Health, confirmed that the programme aims to regulate residents' access to healthcare services through an insurance-based system, while maintaining existing healthcare services for Bahraini citizens without change.

Mandatory Coverage and Additional Options

The programme introduces a compulsory basic insurance package covering primary and secondary healthcare, specialised medical services, emergencies and accidents, in accordance with the approved benefits and regulations.

Optional packages will also be available for individuals seeking additional coverage and benefits.

Implementation will take place gradually as eligible residents apply for new work and residence permits or renew existing ones, rather than transferring all covered residents to the new system simultaneously.

According to official announcements, healthcare arrangements for domestic workers, expatriates employed by government entities and their dependants will remain unchanged under the current phase of implementation.

What Does the Decision Mean for Hotels and Tourism Companies?

The measure is particularly relevant to hospitality and tourism businesses that employ expatriate workers across reception, hotel operations, housekeeping, food and beverage services, transportation and tourism activities.





"The programme aims to regulate residents' access to healthcare services within an insurance-based system, while healthcare services provided to citizens will continue unchanged."

Lieutenant General Dr. Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa
Chairman of the Supreme Council of Health

Implementing the programme will require employers to review the status of eligible employees, coordinate with the relevant authorities and insurance providers, and align insurance subscriptions with work and residence permit procedures.

However, the net financial impact on businesses cannot be determined from the implementation announcement alone.

Employers in Bahrain already pay healthcare fees as part of work permit procedures, making it important to distinguish existing obligations from any additional costs introduced under the new insurance system.

Regulating the Healthcare Sector

The Supreme Council of Health announced the completion of regulatory and operational preparations for the programme's launch, including an agreement with an insurance consortium led by Solidarity Bahrain and the establishment of the mandatory insurance package and its governing requirements.

The programme forms part of Bahrain's Health Insurance Law No. 23 of 2018, which establishes the regulatory framework for compulsory health coverage and defines the responsibilities of employers, sponsors and eligible categories.

Al-Rehla Perspective | An Operational Impact That Requires Assessment

For Bahrain's hospitality sector, the significance of the decision lies in its implications for human resources management, regulatory compliance and business operating costs.

Hotels and tourism companies will need to establish their actual obligations and review existing insurance arrangements before calculating any potential increase in operating expenses.

There is currently no published evidence demonstrating that the new requirements have resulted in higher hotel room rates or tourism service prices.

Any such impact will depend on the actual costs incurred by businesses and their individual pricing policies.

Boulevard World Opens in Riyadh with Experiences Inspired by 17 Countries



The entertainment destination returns for its fifth year as part of Riyadh Season, featuring international markets, restaurants, live performances, water attractions and family-friendly experiences

Riyadh – Saudi Arabia | Al Rehla

Boulevard World opened its doors to visitors on Friday, October 30, 2026, as part of the seventh edition of Riyadh Season, returning for its fifth consecutive year with a range of entertainment and cultural experiences inspired by destinations around the world.

The attraction features themed areas representing the cultures of 17 countries: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Türkiye, Iran, Japan, China, France, Italy, Morocco, Greece, Mexico, Egypt, the United States, India, South Korea, Indonesia and Spain.
Additional areas showcase cultural traditions from Africa, Asia and the Levant.

International Markets and Live Performances

Boulevard World features pavilions designed to reflect the architectural styles and cultural identities of the participating countries.

These areas bring together restaurants, shops, traditional crafts and live artistic performances, allowing visitors to explore different cultures through food, shopping and entertainment.

Among the attractions are the Amazonia Awakens water experience, Vuz Dome cinema featuring immersive 360-degree presentations, and BLVD Pier amusement rides.

Visitors can also enjoy cable car journeys, adventure attractions, racing experiences and interactive games.

The Lake at the Heart of the Experience

The lake is one of Boulevard World's central attractions, offering boat rides and water taxi services.

Meanwhile, the Africa zone provides opportunities to observe and interact with animals, alongside additional activities designed for children and families.

Admission tickets are available through the Webook platform, with separate prices and conditions applying to certain entertainment experiences.

Al-Rehla Perspective | A Family-Friendly Experience in Riyadh

Boulevard World offers visitors to Riyadh an opportunity to explore pavilions inspired by different countries and cultures within a single destination, making it an attractive option for families and travellers seeking a variety of evening activities.

Visitors are advised to check operating hours, ticket prices and which attractions are included in their admission before arriving, particularly during weekends.

The destination's reopening adds another option to Riyadh Season's visitor programme, while its actual economic impact will depend on verified attendance figures and visitor spending throughout the season.







Dubai Hotel Rates Surge by Up to 185% in Some Four-Star Properties Ahead of New Year's Eve



Upper-end advertised rates reach AED 11,700 at five-star hotels and AED 5,000 at four-star properties, while exclusive luxury packages are listed at up to AED 400,000 per night.

Dubai – UAE | Al Rehla

Hotel accommodation rates advertised in Dubai are recording substantial increases ahead of the UAE National Day holiday and New Year's Eve celebrations, with the upper end of the price range at some four-star hotels rising by approximately 185% compared with mid-November.

Based on digital booking platforms, revealed significant price differences across hotel categories and locations. Some properties have also displayed limited-availability notifications for New Year's Eve, indicating booking activity ahead of the celebrations.

Four-Star Hotels Record the Sharpest Increases

Four-star hotels registered the highest percentage increase in upper-end advertised rates within the surveyed sample, rising from AED 1,750 in mid-November to AED 5,000 on December 31, an increase of approximately 185%.

At five-star hotels, upper-end rates climbed from AED 4,450 to AED 11,700, representing an increase of approximately 160%, while lower-end advertised rates rose from AED 260 to AED 650.

Hotels rated three stars and below recorded a 150% increase at the upper end, from AED 1,200 to AED 3,000, with some advertised New Year's Eve rates starting at approximately AED 300.

These figures reflect differences in advertised prices between selected booking periods and should not be interpreted as average hotel rates across Dubai.

Luxury Suites Reach AED 400,000 Per Night

In the luxury segment, some exclusive suites and celebration packages have been advertised at prices reaching AED 400,000 for a single night, offering premium accommodation and exceptional New Year's Eve experiences.

Downtown Dubai, particularly properties overlooking Burj Khalifa, ranks among the most expensive locations, followed by Palm Jumeirah, Business Bay, and Dubai Marina, where pricing is influenced by location, views, and included services.

Meanwhile, Bur Dubai and Deira remain relatively more affordable

alternatives, offering a wider selection of mid-range and budget accommodation.

Minimum-Stay Requirements Increase Overall Costs

Accommodation expenses are not necessarily limited to the advertised nightly rate.

A separate report published by Emarat Al Youm found that some luxury hotels require minimum stays ranging from two to seven nights during the New Year's Eve period.

Final booking costs may also vary depending on taxes, service charges, mandatory celebration packages, and additional services, making it important for travellers to compare the total price before confirming reservations.

Al Rehla Insight | How Can Travellers Manage Rising Accommodation Costs?

Arab travellers planning to celebrate New Year's Eve in Dubai should compare hotel rates in Downtown Dubai with properties located farther from major celebration venues rather than focusing solely on the advertised nightly price.

Checking minimum-stay requirements, mandatory gala dinner charges, cancellation policies, and additional fees can help avoid unexpected expenses.

Hotels in Bur Dubai and Deira may offer more affordable alternatives, particularly for travellers who prioritise access to the city's attractions over direct views of the fireworks.

Flexible reservations with free cancellation can also provide greater flexibility if prices change, although lower rates closer to the holiday period are not guaranteed.





Global Travel and Tourism Sector Projected to Contribute $11.9 Trillion to the World Economy in 2026 and Support 375 Million Jobs



WTTC forecasts 3.1% growth in European travel and tourism and a 5.8% increase in international visitor spending, as London prepares to welcome more than 4,000 exhibitors to World Travel Market

London – United Kingdom | Al Rehla

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) has projected that the travel and tourism sector's contribution to the global economy will reach a record $11.9 trillion in 2026, equivalent to 9.9% of global gross domestic product (GDP), while supporting approximately 375 million jobs worldwide.

The forecasts were published in a statement issued by the Council on Friday, October 30, 2026, as the British capital prepares to host World Travel Market London (WTM London), scheduled to take place from November 3 to 5 at ExCeL London.

The figures highlight the growing economic significance of travel and tourism, although they represent forecasts for the current year rather than final results, amid continuing economic and geopolitical challenges affecting international markets.

European Travel and Tourism Set to Grow by 3.1%

WTTC expects Europe's travel and tourism sector to expand by 3.1% in 2026, compared with growth of 2.6% in the previous year, while international visitor spending is projected to increase by 5.8%.

According to the Council's assessment, these figures indicate that European tourism activity continues to expand at a rate exceeding overall economic growth, highlighting the sector's role in supporting accommodation, transport, retail and related services.

Globally, travel and tourism is projected to support 375 million jobs, equivalent to approximately one in every nine jobs worldwide.

The Council emphasised that sustaining this growth will require continued investment in air connectivity, infrastructure and workforce development.

London Pedestrianises Nearly One Kilometre of Oxford Street

WTTC highlighted London's latest urban transformation following the

introduction of a traffic-free section of Oxford Street on October 26, 2026.

The pedestrianised section stretches for nearly one kilometre between Orchard Street and Great Portland Street, as part of an initiative designed to improve the shopping environment, pedestrian accessibility and the area's appeal to visitors.

Opening the street to pedestrians marks the first phase of a broader improvement programme, which includes plans for more than 50 trees, 100 benches and two public squares, alongside improved seating areas and wayfinding signage.

Further development work is scheduled to continue during 2027.

WTTC estimated that London welcomed approximately 16.4 million international visitors in 2025, presenting the city as an example of how improvements to public spaces can strengthen a destination's tourism competitiveness.

Guevara: Tourism Investment Requires Infrastructure and Skills

Gloria Guevara, President and CEO of the World Travel & Tourism Council, said London's experience demonstrates the importance of governments treating travel and tourism as a strategic economic sector.

She highlighted the need to create favourable conditions for investment through improved connectivity, infrastructure development and workforce skills.

Guevara also noted that travel and tourism could account for approximately one-third of new jobs created worldwide over the coming decade, according to WTTC projections.

However, realising this potential will depend on investment decisions and policies adopted by governments and the private sector.

More Than 4,000 Exhibitors Expected at World Travel Market

London is preparing to host World Travel Market from November 3 to 5, bringing together international airlines, hotels, tour operators, tourism destinations, technology providers and travel service companies.

According to the exhibition's promotional figures, the event is expected to feature representatives from more than 180 countries and over 4,000 exhibitors, alongside a network of more than 5,500 specialist buyers.

These figures reflect the scale of planned commercial participation but should not be treated as confirmed attendance totals for the 2026 edition before the event begins.

The exhibition provides a platform for business meetings, investment discussions, partnerships and the exploration of changing travel demand, coinciding with forecasts of continued growth in tourism's contribution to the global economy and employment.

Al-Rehla Perspective | What Do These Figures Mean for Arab Tourism?

WTTC's forecasts illustrate the scale of economic opportunities associated with international tourism growth, but they do not necessarily mean that every market or destination will benefit at the same rate.

The ability of Arab destinations to capture a share of international travel demand depends on measurable factors, including air connectivity, hotel capacity, regulatory facilitation, product diversification and service quality.

The transformation of Oxford Street also highlights another dimension of destination competitiveness: the design of public spaces, the pedestrian experience and convenient access to shopping and entertainment districts.

For Arab tourism companies participating in World Travel Market London, the real commercial value of the event will ultimately depend on the business meetings, contracts and partnerships it generates, rather than exhibitor and visitor numbers alone.

Tunisia's Nabeul Celebrates Harissa with Street Festival Turning Culinary Heritage into a Tourism Experience



The 12th edition runs until November 1, featuring cooking demonstrations, tastings and traditional crafts, while Italian pizza with harissa sauce brings Mediterranean flavours together around a UNESCO-recognised culinary tradition.

Nabeul – Tunisia | Al Rehla

The Tunisian city of Nabeul launched the 12th edition of its Harissa Festival on Friday, October 30, 2026, bringing a major part of the celebrations to Habib Bourguiba Avenue in the city centre.

The festival combines culinary heritage, traditional cooking and local crafts, offering visitors an opportunity to discover one of Tunisia's most distinctive culinary traditions through tastings, live demonstrations and cultural encounters.

Organised by the Association for the Preservation of the Medina of Nabeul, the festival runs until November 1.

A dedicated tent on the city's main avenue showcases local peppers, harissa and related products, while Dar Nabeul, located in the historic Medina, hosts artistic workshops, educational activities and culinary experiences.

Harissa: A Tunisian Culinary Tradition Recognised by UNESCO

Harissa holds a special place in Tunisian food culture, with pepper cultivation, drying, grinding and preparation closely linked to social customs and traditional skills passed down through generations, particularly among women and families involved in its production.

In 2022, UNESCO inscribed the knowledge, skills and culinary and social practices associated with Tunisian harissa on its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The festival offers visitors an opportunity to discover different varieties of Nabeul harissa and traditional preparation methods, while observing the production techniques behind the region's well-known local specialities.

Italian Pizza Meets the Flavours of Nabeul

One of the highlights of this year's edition is the participation of Italian pizza specialists, who are presenting a culinary experience that combines Italian cuisine with Tunisian harissa through pizzas prepared with a sauce incorporating the local speciality.

The programme also includes tastings of traditional dishes that have become less common in everyday meals, harissa-making workshops, and educational sessions examining peppers, local seed varieties and the importance of preserving culinary heritage.

Cultural activities include painting,

mosaic and Arabic calligraphy workshops, connecting the culinary experience with the arts and traditional crafts for which Nabeul is renowned.

Women Artisans at the Heart of the Experience

Local women artisans and producers are participating in the festival by showcasing harissa, spices and pottery, with opportunities for visitors to purchase products directly.

The initiative connects tourism with traditional products and small-scale craftsmanship.

Festival director Samir Gargni explained that extending the event to Habib Bourguiba Avenue aims to accommodate visitors and introduce local products to a wider audience.

The expansion also provides an opportunity to highlight women artisans and small producers, although no verified figures are currently available on sales volumes or the festival's economic returns.





Al-Rehla Perspective | How to Experience Nabeul's Harissa Festival

Visitors to Nabeul can explore the festival tent on Habib Bourguiba Avenue until November 1, where local harissa varieties and pepper-based products are displayed.

They can then head to Dar Nabeul on Farhat Hached Avenue to attend workshops and cultural activities.

The experience can be complemented by a walk through the traditional markets of the Medina and an introduction to Nabeul's pottery, one of the city's best-known artisanal products.

What makes this experience particularly distinctive is that it presents harissa as more than a spicy condiment. It tells a story of the land, culinary traditions and skills preserved by Tunisian families across generations.



Middle East Loses 2.2 Million Airline Seats in a Year as Capacity Falls 5.7% in October

OAG report: 35.9 million scheduled departing seats across the region. The UAE and Saudi Arabia lead the markets, Dubai retains its airport leadership despite an annual decline, while Abu Dhabi records growth against the regional trend.

Dubai – UAE | Al Rehla

The Middle East aviation market lost approximately 2.2 million scheduled airline seats over the past year, as departing seat capacity declined by 5.7% in October 2026 compared with the same month in 2025, according to data from aviation analytics company OAG.

Total scheduled capacity across the region reached approximately 35.9 million seats, with international flights accounting for 88.4%, equivalent to around 31.8 million seats, while domestic services represented the remaining 11.6%.

The figures reveal significant differences in performance across markets and airlines. Several major countries recorded year-on-year declines in capacity, while some airports and carriers achieved growth despite the overall regional downturn.

UAE and Saudi Arabia Lead Regional Markets

The United Arab Emirates retained its position as the Middle East's largest aviation market by scheduled departing seat capacity in October, with approximately 7.17 million seats, despite a 9.5% year-on-year decline, equivalent to around 754,000 fewer seats.

Saudi Arabia ranked second with approximately 7.08 million seats, down 2% from a year earlier, while Qatar recorded around 2.6 million seats, representing a 5.3% decline.

The comparison shows that the region's three leading markets experienced different degrees of contraction, even though all recorded annual declines in scheduled capacity.

In the UAE, scheduled seats increased by nearly 23% compared with June 2026, rising from approximately 5.8 million to 7.17 million. Total scheduled departing capacity across the five months from June to October reached around 34 million seats.

Dubai Declines as Abu Dhabi Records Growth

Among airports, Dubai International



Airport maintained its regional leadership with approximately 4.57 million scheduled departing seats, although capacity declined by 14.3% year-on-year, equivalent to around 765,000 fewer seats.

However, its capacity increased by 24.3% compared with June, when it stood at approximately 3.68 million seats.

Zayed International Airport in Abu Dhabi recorded approximately 1.69 million seats, achieving annual growth of 6.9%, equivalent to around 109,000 additional seats.

Sharjah International Airport, meanwhile, offered approximately 840,000 seats in October, compared with around 770,000 in June.

These figures highlight contrasting trends even within a single national market, with Abu Dhabi recording year-on-year growth while Dubai's scheduled capacity remained below its level a year earlier.

Airlines Report Diverging Performance

Emirates retained its position as the Middle East's largest airline by scheduled seat capacity, offering approximately 3.09 million seats in October despite a 7.9% decline compared with October 2025.

Etihad Airways recorded around 1.43 million seats, achieving year-on-year growth of 8.5% and moving against the trend reported by several major regional carriers.

Flydubai offered approximately 1.09 million seats, down 18.1% year-on-year, although its capacity increased by 27.5% compared with June.

Air Arabia recorded around 860,000 seats, representing an annual decline of 8.2%.

These results reflect differences in airlines' capacity strategies, but do not, on their own, establish actual passenger demand or route profitability.

Al-Rehla Perspective | What Does the Decline Mean for Tourism?

Scheduled airline seat capacity is an important indicator of available air transport supply and the ability of destinations to accommodate travellers. However, it is not equivalent to actual passenger traffic or international tourist arrivals.

A decline in scheduled seats does not necessarily translate into an equivalent reduction in tourism activity, as actual outcomes depend on aircraft load factors, transit traffic, and the distribution of flights across markets and destinations.

For tourism companies, hotels and airports, comparing scheduled capacity with actual passenger numbers, hotel occupancy rates and tourism expenditure is essential to understanding the broader impact on the travel industry.

October's figures reveal a regional aviation market characterised by contrasting performance trends, highlighting the importance of monitoring airline schedules throughout the winter season rather than interpreting the overall capacity decline as a uniform reduction in demand across all Middle Eastern markets.

Thailand's Hotel Industry Faces Mounting Supply Pressures as 51% of Operators Report Losses and 148 Companies Deregister



Business deregistrations rise 42% in nine months, while accommodation supply reaches 876,000 rooms amid slowing tourism demand and expectations of lower average room rates in 2026

Bangkok – Thailand | Al Rehla

Thailand's hotel and accommodation industry is facing growing financial pressures, with business deregistrations rising 42% during the first nine months of 2026 to reach 148 companies, while 51% of hotel operators reported losses in the previous year.

According to a report published by Kasikorn Research Center (KResearch) on October 26, 2026, accommodation supply continues to expand faster than tourism demand is recovering, intensifying competition and adding to operating costs, particularly for smaller businesses.

148 Companies Deregistered as 779 New Businesses Enter the Market

Data from Thailand's Department of Business Development showed that 148 accommodation businesses deregistered between January and September, while 779 new companies were registered, representing a 31.2% decline in new registrations compared with the same period in 2025.

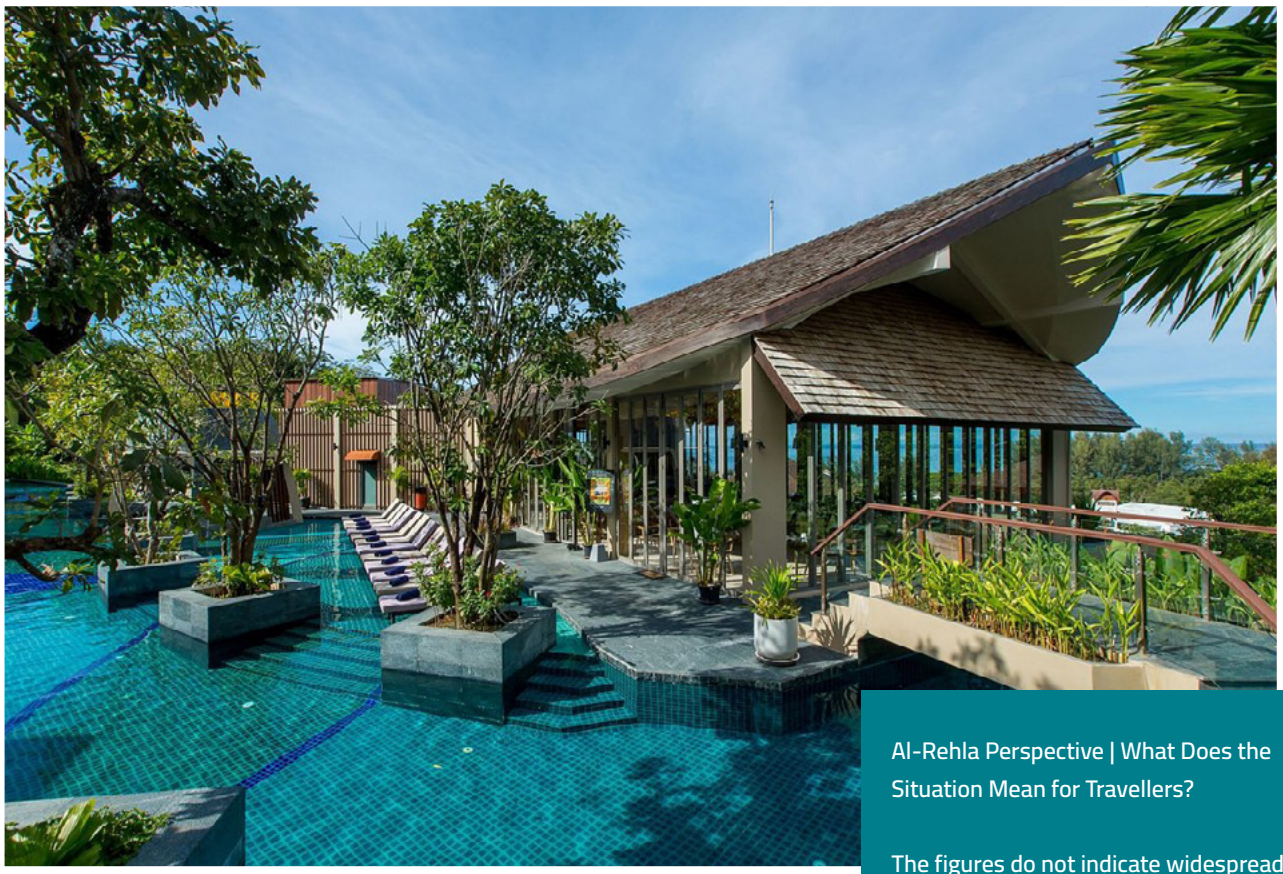
Despite the slowdown, the number of newly registered companies remained above the level recorded during the corresponding period in 2024.

Business deregistrations do not necessarily mean that 148 hotel properties have physically closed. However, they highlight the financial challenges facing some companies operating in the accommodation and hospitality sector.

The report also revealed that more than 38% of operators recorded consecutive losses between 2023 and 2025, with the proportion exceeding 42% among smaller establishments.

876,000 Rooms as Demand Struggles to Keep Pace

Thailand's hotel and accommodation supply reached approximately 876,000 rooms in the first half of 2026, an increase of 3.4% compared with the end of 2025 and 11.7% above the level recorded in 2019. Meanwhile, year-on-year growth in



hotel occupancy rates was limited to 0.18% during the first nine months of 2026, while 19 provinces recorded declines in occupancy.

KResearch noted that the average number of staying visitors per room is expected to fall from 249 in 2019 to approximately 228 in 2026, illustrating the widening gap between accommodation capacity and demand.

Competition has also intensified with the expansion of alternative accommodation, including approximately 50,000 short-term rental units across five major tourism destinations, among them Bangkok, Phuket and Chiang Mai.

31.4 Million International Tourists Expected in 2026

KResearch forecasts that Thailand will welcome approximately 31.4 million international tourists in 2026, a decline of 4% compared with 2025 and equivalent to around 79% of the country's pre-pandemic arrivals in 2019.

Despite these challenges, the research centre expects the hotel and accommodation market to reach approximately 1.1 trillion Thai baht in value, representing growth of 2.6%, supported by domestic tourism, meetings and conferences, and other hospitality-related services.

The industry comprises approximately 15,000 operators, more than 98% of which are small and medium-sized enterprises, and supports around 430,000 jobs.

KResearch also forecasts a 0.8% decline in the average daily room rate during 2026, reflecting stronger competition among accommodation providers seeking to attract guests.

Al-Rehla Perspective | What Does the Situation Mean for Travellers?

The figures do not indicate widespread hotel closures or suggest that confirmed bookings across Thailand are generally at risk. However, they reveal considerable differences in the financial and operational conditions of accommodation providers.

Travellers, particularly those booking small or independently operated properties well in advance, are advised to verify that their chosen accommodation remains operational and confirm reservations directly with the property.

Keeping proof of payment, reviewing cancellation and refund policies, and selecting booking platforms with reliable customer support can also provide additional protection.

For hospitality industry professionals, the findings highlight the importance of monitoring profitability, occupancy and room-rate trends rather than relying solely on increases in accommodation capacity or overall revenue growth.

Evok Appoints Francesca Tozzi to Lead the Opening of Brach Roma

Over 25 years of luxury hospitality experience drives preparations for the new hotel in the Italian capital.. The anticipated 2027 project strengthens the Brach brand's expansion after Paris and Madrid.

Rome – Italy | Al Rehla

Evok Collection has announced the appointment of Francesca Tozzi as General Manager of Brach Roma, which the group is preparing to open in the Italian capital in 2027 — a step that reinforces its plans to expand in Europe's luxury hospitality market and supports its preparations to launch a new hotel destination combining upscale accommodation with culture, culinary arts, and wellness.

According to the group's announcement issued on October 15, 2026, Tozzi assumed her duties on October 1, taking charge of the hotel's operational preparations, including building teams, developing services, and shaping the guest experience in collaboration with Evok Collection's executive management.

International Experience Spanning Over 25 Years

Francesca Tozzi brings more than 25 years of professional experience in the luxury hospitality sector, both within Italy and abroad, with a specialized track record in hotel openings, repositioning, and enhancing operational and commercial performance.

Before joining the group, she spent more than four years leading Six Senses Rome, where she oversaw an 18-month pre-opening phase through to the hotel's opening in 2023.

Her career also includes serving as General Manager of Capri Tiberio Palace, Il Pellicano, and Villa La Massa, alongside earlier roles with Four Seasons and Villa d'Este.

A New Hotel Destination in the Heart of Rome

Brach Roma is set to open its doors in the historic center of the Italian capital, near Piazza del Popolo, within a historic building redeveloped to comprise 58 rooms and suites, along with a restaurant, wellness and fitness facilities, and a 25-meter swimming pool, according to project details announced by the group.

The hotel reflects the Brach brand's concept of merging hospitality with culinary arts, culture, and sports, with a guest experience inspired by the city's identity and lifestyle.

European Expansion Driven by Local Identity

The opening of Brach Roma marks the brand's third destination after Paris and Madrid, part of Evok Collection's strategy to develop hotel destinations that connect with the character of their cities and offer experiences that go beyond conventional stays.



The group, founded in 2014 and comprising the Nolinski and Brach brands, continues to strengthen its presence in European tourism markets, with a focus on design, culture, personalized service, and sustainability.

The selection of Tozzi to lead the hotel reflects the importance of specialized operational expertise during the pre-opening phase, particularly as luxury hotel brands increasingly move toward offering integrated tourism experiences that combine accommodation with culture, wellness, and local life.

6 Stays That Reveal a Different Side of Geneva



From sleeping aboard a luxury catamaran that accommodates 11 guests to staying on farms and camping by the lake, Geneva is opening new horizons for its visitors in rural tourism and unconventional experiences.

Geneva – Switzerland | Al Rehla

The Geneva Tourism and Conventions Foundation is highlighting a range of unconventional accommodation experiences that allow visitors to discover a different face of the Swiss city, away from luxury hotels and the usual tourist landmarks, through options that combine sailing, rural stays, and camping in the heart of nature.

These experiences target travelers seeking a connection with local life, exploring villages, vineyards, and the shores of Lake Geneva, within a tourism approach that gives accommodation a fundamental role in discovering the destination.

Sleeping on a Boat Near the Geneva Fountain

Top among the experiences is the "FLOATinn" stay, which offers overnight accommodation aboard a luxury catamaran that holds 11 guests, featuring five double cabins and one single, with the possibility of organizing boat trips to explore the lake.

The boat's mooring is located approximately 100 meters from the famous Geneva Fountain, combining waterfront accommodation with easy access to the city center.

In the lakeside village of Hermance, "Camping and Beach d'Hermance" offers a seasonal experience that combines camping with beach enjoyment and strolling through traditional alleyways.

Farms Welcome Guests Among the Vineyards

In the countryside surrounding Geneva, "La Ferme Enchantée" welcomes visitors in the village of Russin, amid views of vineyards and agricultural lands.

As for "Ferme du Lignon," it features four guest rooms, an inner courtyard, and a terrace, alongside an active farm that sells its local products, offering an experience that combines rural accommodation with proximity to the city.

Camping Between Rivers and the Lake

Seasonal options include "Camping du Val de l'Allondon" in Satigny, near the Allondon River and nature trails, as well as "Pointe-à-la-Bise" campsite in Vesenaz, along the shores of Lake Geneva.

These options reflect the diversity of Geneva's tourism offering, as the visitor's experience extends from urban landmarks to villages, farms, and natural spaces, giving travelers opportunities to discover the city from a perspective more connected to its local environment.

Seasonal operating dates and booking availability remain details that should be verified in advance when planning a visit.

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THREE DAYS OF BIGGER OPPORTUNITIES

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